



8 O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah. 9 Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed. 10 For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. 11 For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. 12 O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee. (Psalm 84:8-12)

The pillars of Reformation Faith have been summarized in Five Solas, meaning alones:

Sola Scriptura	Scripture Alone
Sola Fide	Faith Alone
Sola Gratia	Grace Alone
Sola Christus	Christ Alone
Sola Deo Gloria	Glory to God Alone

I am covering these five in the next few devotions beginning today with Grace Alone.

There is an interesting account that is told of the life of Jonathan Edwards, third president of Princeton and one of America's greatest theologians. (author of "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" – the most famous sermon ever preached in America) Edwards had a daughter who was both ungovernable and incorrigible – infirmities unknown to the outside world. A fine young man fell in love with the girl and asked Edwards for his daughter's hand for in marriage. "You cannot have her," was the brisk response. "But why not?" answered the young man. "I love her, and she loves me." "You cannot have her," was the repeated response. "But why not?" asked the boy. "Because she is not worthy of you," replied Edwards. "But," responded the boy, "She is a Christian, is she not?" "Yes, she is a Christian, but the grace of God can live with some people with whom no one else could ever live," said Edwards. How true! If Grace can abide me and my foibles, He can plainly live with any others. Until we recognize that fact, we can never have an amicable relationship with grace.

How does one earn the grace of God? That is a simple question with an even more simple answer: No one can earn God's grace – it is a free gift. *14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. 15 But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. 16 And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification.* (Romans 5:14-16)

By definition, grace must be unmerited. We can do NOTHING to earn the grace of God. Grace is not only a gift, but it is more – it is a FREE gift. But is that consistent with proper grammar? Yes, certainly when you consider that many gifts are given by men to gain privilege or favor. But a FREE gift has no strings attached.

Let us note the biblical counsel of the XIII Article of Religion of the English Reformation Church:

XIII. Of Works before Justification.

Works done before the grace of Christ, and the Inspiration of the Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ; neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the School-authors say) deserve grace of congruity: yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.

This means that NOTHING we do of our own volition is of worth without Christ moving in our beings to favor those works – even the best of charitable works. *1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.* (1 Cor 13:1-3)

The Book of Ephesians is one of many Books of the New Testament through which runs a rich vein of God's Grace. *3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. 7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; 8 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence.* (Eph 1:3-8) Even the clear counsel of God, however, is often not sufficient to convince the self-centered heart that salvation is an act of grace outside any personal merit or action on his part.

In Chapter Two of Ephesians, we are clearly told we are “*dead in trespasses and sin.*” As far as I know, the dead can do nothing even if they had a will to do it – and they do not! *1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.* (Eph 2:1-6) Ah, yes! You and I were both still-born in sin and trespasses, but while we yet slept in the death of sin, we were aroused and made alive in Christ. *5 For the living know that they shall die: but the dead*

know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.
(Eccl 9:4-5)

Remember back to another dead man that had lain so long in the tomb that his body was putrefying – Lazarus by name. His body was still and helpless. His mind no longer had a hint of conscious thought. The cell tissues of his body were in decay, and his blood was clotted within his veins. That, friend, is DEATH. It hobbles the feet, locks the jaw, and blinds the eyes. It stops the ears, and empties the mind. So did Lazarus lie dead and helpless in a stone-cold tomb. He was not conscious of the fanfare without the tomb as the Lord approached. He was not cognizant of the time that had elapsed from his death until that moment that Christ spoke. In his death wrappings, his body was assuming the structure of the dust from which it sprang.

Lazarus had done nothing to merit the special favor of being resurrected from the grave. It was the fate of all who died. But Christ came and stopped before the tomb. He had the friends of Lazarus remove the stone to the tomb's entrance. *40 Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?* *41 Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.* *42 And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.* (John 11:40-42) All great service to God is preceded by prayer. In this case of Christ resurrecting Lazarus, He uttered His prayer for the benefit of those who heard it for the Father knew the yearnings of His heart aforementioned. Lazarus was EXACTLY dead like the lost sinner is spiritually dead. No power on earth could benefit Lazarus. That is why Jesus lifted up His eyes to the Father, and so should we in times of desperate need.

43 And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth." (John 11:43) Just how loud was that Voice of Christ? It was so loud that it penetrated time and eternity. It penetrated the stone walls of the tomb of Lazarus. It penetrated ears that had been dead for four days. It penetrated a heart that had grown cold and rigid. But at the sound of that voice, a warm surge began to pulse in that old dead heart. Suddenly, the blood began to circulate in the arteries and veins of Lazarus. His mind was made alert, and he obeyed the command of Jesus even though he was hobbled by the tightly wound grave clothes. He emerged from the tomb after four days of lying in it. The Holy Spirit beckons to life those whom He calls from the grave of sin; and then what does He do? He does precisely what our Lord does for Lazarus: *"Loose him, and let him go."* John 11:44 (KJV) We are set free in Christ from death just as was Lazarus. *36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.* (John 8:36) That is an act of free grace alone and not the work of any man – dead or alive!